

COMMUNITY ADAPTS TO YOUNGER RESIDENTS - By Marci Shatzman– Sun Sentinel

The gym in Villa Borghese opens before 6 a.m., so residents can get in their exercise before work.

Work? In a retirement community?

"We began as a much older community, but now we're getting younger," explained Mel Schwager, the homeowner association president. "It's the next wave ."

He estimates there has been a 40 percent turnover since the community was built 10 years ago.

On Saturday afternoon, newer and older residents will come together around the pool, in the ballroom and on the parking lot with a band and food carts to celebrate the 10th anniversary. And their leadership is looking to the future and intent on keeping up. They have to.

Anasca's first 55-plus community, according to Mel, it was among the prototypes for the housing of choice for retirees now: mostly single-lot-line homes with open floor plans and large lanais, big clubhouses with a pool and lots of activities, tennis courts but no golf course to maintain.

Perched on the corner of Lake Ida and Jog roads in western Delray Beach, Villa Borghese faces stiff competition for re-sales. A decade after it set the bar, there are similar communities all the way north to Forest Hill Boulevard. GL Homes slipped in two close by before the housing slump largely halted production of more adult developments in western Palm Beach County.

Luckily, Anasca made Villa Borghese's clubhouse big enough, Mel said, a problem facing other developments of the same age.

So all theirs required was a soft renovation. They've repainted, and there are new chandeliers and window treatments in the ballroom, which seats 400 for shows. They upgraded the sound system and installed one for the hearing impaired.

Maris Newmark, social director, keeps adding to the activities calendar to accommodate the younger element. They hired a fitness company to conduct classes, and she's starting an art program in January.

Ed Cohen, board treasurer, has lived there since 2000. He heads the committee planning the 10th anniversary parties, which also includes a sold-out dinner dance in February at Benvenuto, a catering place in Boynton Beach, to accommodate a larger crowd than they can inside.

He said resident Joe Arbus produced a 14-minute video to encourage pride of place.

"It starts with a birds' eye view from a satellite and you go for a tour. It's all about what is now, and it fades back into a field of tomatoes and the houses being built," he said.

Ten years after it occupied that field, their future looks bright, he said.

"Financially we're strong. We've updated the clubhouse and improved a number of things around us to stay competitive."